

# THE BEST OF BOTH SIDES

Two years ago this month, *North Dakota OUTDOORS* debuted a new feature called From Both Sides, a regular column designed to thoroughly explore the details of contemporary issues, with an invitation for readers to provide feedback.

We've covered somewhat controversial subjects like artificial baiting for big game, and hunting and fishing contests, as well as more low-profile issues like lake renovations and use of artificial fish habitat.

This month, Both Sides revisits some of the topics we've covered in the past two years and highlights comments the Game and Fish Department has received via email, phone call or letter on a variety of issues. The topics selected are those that generated the most response. If we do not have a response supporting each side of the subject, it is because the comments we received were all related to only one side. The comments may be edited for space, grammar and spelling.



## Topic:

## Fish and Wildlife Contests

Issue: September/October 2004

**One side:** Contests based on fishing or hunting are fun events for friendly competition, or well-run professional events that are of interest to anglers or hunters. Participants have to operate within the law, and contests can provide local economic activity, as well as money for charities or wildlife groups.

**The other side:** Hunting and fishing are pursuits that primarily involve personal satisfaction and not competition. Contests portray hunting and fishing in a negative way to people who don't hunt or fish.

## Reader comments

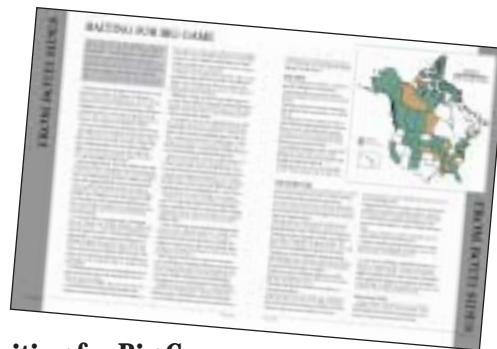
• *I strongly feel that enough is enough. Wildlife and fish and contests do not agree. Wildlife and fish are being marketed one way or another and many ... are becoming ex-hunters and fishermen. I spent most of Saturday helping a farmer, who I didn't know, keep ducks and geese out of his winter wheat, yet when I asked if I could hunt geese this a.m., he was reluctant because his son charges to hunt on dad's land. I have two sons who have quit hunting and fishing, and are encouraging their kids not to start. I sold a lot of equipment and am considering selling more, yet I*

*bought hunting and fishing licenses since I was 14 years old (now 58) ... I and many others I know, really wish these contests were ended, there are other means to raise money.*

– via email

• *I am opposed to fish and wildlife contests. The contests send the wrong message to both the nonhunting and the hunting public. A contest to see who can shoot the most birds, in my opinion, is foolish and nonethical and counter-productive to wildlife management. Contests send all the wrong messages to our youth about what is important in hunting, and to others who view this behavior ... I would like the contests to cease and for the groups needing funds to find other ethical means to raise them.*

– via email



## Baiting for Big Game August 2003

**One side:** Putting out food to attract wildlife for hunting purposes can concentrate animals around bait sites, which can increase spread of disease, reduce an animal's wild character, attract predators, spread noxious weeds and draw animals from one property to another.

**The other side:** Baiting can be an effective means of drawing in game animals for close-range shots that increase the likelihood of clean kills.

## Reader comments

• *Over the past several years I have watched the practice of deer baiting grow from a few isolated small bait sites to truck loads of grain purposely dumped along bordering landowners' properties to relocate deer from one area to another. In some instances, there are baiting wars taking place. Although it is frustrating to scout natural travel patterns only to have a load of feed dumped near the area you have permission to hunt, the real concern that I have with deer baiting are the concerns with disease and overpopulation in these high deer density areas ... After checking on the regulations in all the states and provinces that border North Dakota I see that they have all eliminated deer baiting. I hope your Department will also take the appropriate action before we lose one of our most precious assets.*

– via email

• *Let me start by saying I do not bait and I believe NDGF should immediately step in and put a ban or very heavy restrictions on baiting before this practice becomes more popular with hunters and more damaging to our land and deer herd than it already is, or has the potential to be ... I have personally had to quit hunting some areas that I hunted for years because baiting changed the deer travel patterns so much that I no longer had any significant deer traffic through these areas during legal hunting hours ... NDGF needs to make a decision as to whether baiting should be allowed at all, or on a regulated basis, based on the health concerns of the deer and the weed concerns around bait piles ... I'm sure your biologists and land management people have already given you their input on the matter, and I would be surprised if their recommendations have been anything other than elimination or strict regulation.*

– via email

• *I have read many articles in newspapers, magazines, etc., about those who want baiting for deer outlawed. I am a bowhunter who disagrees ... The majority of us ... are able to hunt an evening or two a week. Baiting allows us to have some success without paying an outfitter to probably prebait before the hunter shows up.*

– via personal letter



## Antler Point Restrictions February 2005

**One side:** Some deer hunters would like to see the Game and Fish Department start some type of management scheme, such as antler point or antler spread restrictions, to increase the number of mature bucks in the state's deer population.

**The other side:** Antler point restrictions yield a high rate of illegal kill, and some other options reduce opportunities for hunters who don't care whether the buck they get meets somebody else's standards as a trophy.

## Commenting on Both Sides

Each month readers are invited to share their thoughts on the From Both Sides. Our intent is not necessarily to publish those responses, but as a way to provide input for Game and Fish managers. We have received many good letters from readers, as indicated by excerpts printed here, and perhaps could add to the discussion on each topic by adding responses to this monthly feature.

We are considering putting some responses in the magazine two months from the time Both Sides is printed. For example, responses to the July topic would be included in the September-October magazine.

To tell us what you think, send an email to [ndgf@state.nd.us](mailto:ndgf@state.nd.us), and put "Both Sides" in the subject line; call us at 701-328-6317; or write North Dakota Game and Fish Department, 100 N. Bismarck Expressway, Bismarck, ND 58501.

## Reader comments

• *I have been supportive of such a concept in North Dakota for many years, but I think it will be a hard sell in a state where far too large a percentage of deer hunters measure success by body count or by who gets done first ... If I could vote: offer fewer buck tags and raise the price. Offer more doe tags and lower the price.*

– via email

• *I strongly believe that reducing the buck licenses in applicable units is by far the best practice ... I would be willing to wait that extra two years for a buck license, especially if I knew what was out there was quality ... reducing buck licenses by one-third in applicable units is a great way to get the quality up.*

– via email

• *I think the best thing is to leave the management of our deer herd to the professionals currently doing it ... We currently have the best of both worlds right now. We have quantity and quality if you take the time. The availability of doe licenses and the long season gives each hunter the ability to practice buck management.*

– via email